Mrs George Cox 24

Third Thousand.]

STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS.

A WORD TO BELIEVERS ON

THE NEW YEAR.

(No. VI.)

BY THE REV. R. W. DIBDIN, M.A.,

MINISTER OF WEST-STREET CHAPEL, ST. GILES'S.

FROM time to time weary travellers sit down to rest, and if they journey in company, and are like-minded, they refresh each other by friendly converse. The end of the old year brings as it were a new milestone before the Christian pilgrim, and shews him he is somewhat nearer the end of his pilgrimage.

Here, then, pilgrims may halt for a little while on the threshold of a new year, and "take sweet counsel together." They may talk over the trials and mercies of the past, and encourage each other by the hopes and promises of the future.

My fellow pilgrims, let us have a few words together on this NEW YEAR. None of us have been without trials and crosses: all of us have had abundant mercies. *Some*, no doubt, have suffered this last year more than others; while some, on the other hand, have little else than mercies to recall.

But in *one* respect we are ALL alike. Our sins have been many, yea, "more in number than the hairs of our heads." And yet here we are, safely preserved, monuments of his goodness and love: seeing he "hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us after our iniquities." Abounding grace has cancelled abounding

sin. Here, then, we may one and all unite in the words of the Psalmist: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities."

And as regards the FUTURE. Who can say what awaits any one of us in this new stage of our journey? Sickness, bereavement, temporal crosses of all sorts we are liable to in common with all mankind. That which has befallen others in a past year while we have escaped, it may now be our lot to suffer. Whilst their wounds are healing and tears wiped away, afflictions and sorrow may be in store for us. In this changing world, they who laugh now may weep and lament before another year has passed over us. This is evidently true from the common course of things.

But there are certain "SIGNS OF THE TIMES" which more especially call upon the pilgrim people of God to "have their loins girded," and to be prepared for a rougher road than hitherto they have had to travel. Ignorance and self-sufficiency turn aside from such warnings with contempt: "the simple pass on and are punished," while "a wise man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself." It matters little that profane scoffers ridicule the thought of approaching great and trying changes for the saints of God (in *this* country at least), or that well-intentioned and even right-hearted men are crying "Peace, peace," and striving to silence the alarm which the voice of PROPHECY and the PROVIDENCE of God alike sound in the ears of a sleeping and a slothful church. The cry is with many as Christ said, "My Lord delayeth his coming." False security and worldly-mindedness combine together to put men off their guard, and render them unprepared for the "coming of the day of Christ." Thousands are neglecting the *present duty* of caring for the "widow and the fatherless," for the aged and the sick, while they are laying up carefully for generations to come; withholding that from Christ's cause and the poor which they vainly attempt to prove (*without a word of Scripture*) they are bound in duty to appropriate to themselves. Sad, that

many should neglect the *plain duty* of providing for their living poor relatives while they quote the very word of God which commands them to do so, as a warrant for laying up for their kindred after their death (1 Tim. v. 3). God, however, is "not mocked," and "what a man soweth that shall he reap."

But you, beloved in the Lord, be practically and really spiritual, and "LIVE AS PILGRIMS DO."

Be sure of this. Your heavenly Father has foreseen all the trials of the rest of your journey, and he has provided beforehand "a way to escape," or strength for the day. Your safe and happy arrival at the home and rest of the family of God is as sure as if it were already accomplished. No man knoweth what "a day may bring forth." Nor do you know but that the COMING YEAR may bring you into the full enjoyment of the "INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS IN LIGHT."

HYMN I.

O GOD, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come;
Be thou our guard whilst life shall last,
And our eternal home.

A thousand ages, in thy sight,
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

Remark, my soul, the narrow bounds
Of the revolving year;
How swift the weeks complete their rounds!
How short the months appear!

So fast eternity comes on,—
And that important day,
When all that mortal life hath done
God's judgment shall survey.

Waken, O God, my trifling heart,
  Its great concern to see;
That I may act the Christian's part,
  And give the year to thee.

So shall their course more grateful roll,
  If future years arise;
Or this shall bear my happy soul
  To joy that never dies.

HYMN II.

Now, gracious Lord! thine arm reveal,
  And make thy goodness known;
Now let us plead a Saviour's name,
  And venture near thy throne.

From all the guilt of former sin
  Let mercy set us free;
And let the year we now begin,
  Begin and end with thee.

Let us the Spirit's power prove
  That saints may love the more;
And sinners now may learn to love,
  Who never loved before.

And while we wait till thou appear
  To take thy chosen home,
May growing numbers worship here,
  And sing "Lord Jesus, come!"

James Nisbet and Co., 21, Berners Street, Oxford Street.
and J. F. Shaw, Southampton Row.

Price 1*d.*, *or* 2*s. per* 100.

Walton and Mitchell, Printers, Wardour Street, Oxford Street.